



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

April 2, 2001

H.R. 581

A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to use funds appropriated for wildland fire management in the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001, to reimburse the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to facilitate the interagency cooperation required under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 in connection with wildland fire management

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on March 28, 2001

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 581 would increase direct spending by \$3 million in 2001 and decrease direct spending by the same amount in 2002. Because the bill would affect direct spending, pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. H.R. 581 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

For 2001, the Congress appropriated a total of \$2.8 billion for wildland fire programs administered by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service. Some of that funding was for projects to reduce hazardous fuels on federal lands. Before agencies may implement such projects, they must meet the requirements of various environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act. Section 7 of that act requires the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to consult and confer with other federal agencies on projects that may affect endangered species. H.R. 581 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to use existing funds to reimburse the FWS and the NMFS for costs incurred to review fire management plans.

DOI has determined it already has authority to reimburse such costs under current law; thus, H.R. 581 would have no impact on that agency. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), however, under current law the Secretary of Agriculture does not have authority to reimburse such costs. Based on information from the Forest Service, CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 581 would authorize USDA to reimburse FWS and NMFS for \$11 million in 2001. Furthermore, we estimate that without the authority provided by H.R. 581, the Forest Service would spend \$8 million in 2001 and \$3 million in 2002 on analyses

that it is authorized to perform under current law. CBO estimates that, by causing faster spending of funds already appropriated, enacting H.R. 581 would increase direct spending by \$3 million in 2001, and reduce it by the same amount in 2002.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Megan Carroll. This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.